



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

**"TSA's Surface Inspection Program: Strengthening Security or
Squandering Scant Resources?"**

**May 31, 2012
Remarks as Prepared**

I would like to welcome everyone to this hearing and thank all of our witnesses. We look forward to your testimony.

Less than two percent of TSA's nearly eight billion dollar budget goes toward surface.

There are two primary reasons for this.

First, we know aviation continues to be a major focus for our enemies.

Second, our surface systems are inherently accessible to millions of people every day. They have to remain open for many reasons, not least of which is to keep our economy on track.

Having said that, terrorists see surface transportation as a very attractive target. And since we can't screen everyone and everything that gets on a

train, truck or bus, intelligence sharing, deterrence, and detection measures are extremely important.

Since 9/11, there has been a long list of devastating attacks against mass transit systems worldwide.

There have also been a number of plots against our own transit systems. Thankfully, the work of our intelligence community and the vigilance of everyday Americans have helped disrupt those plots. But that does not mean we can afford to lose focus.

Regardless of its failings in providing aviation security, TSA's role is more clearly defined in that environment.

On the other hand, local transit agencies and law enforcement take the lead in providing security for surface transportation. And so far, TSA has done a good job of making sure it stays that way.

Unfortunately, it looks like one of the few surface initiatives TSA is responsible for has not been very well received, or well managed.

At a hearing held by this Subcommittee last year, industry witnesses voiced their concerns with TSA's surface inspection program. Their concerns sparked our hearing today.

Over the last several months, Subcommittee staff has conducted oversight of the surface inspectors. Here are five of the problems we know about:

1. Most surface inspectors have no surface transportation experience or surface background whatsoever. Many surface inspectors were promoted from screening passengers at airports.
2. These inspectors report to the Federal Security Directors at the local airports, who commonly also do not possess any surface transportation experience.
3. At least one local TSA official indicated that he is always looking for things for his inspectors to do to occupy their time.
4. Most surface inspectors have just two things to look for on a typical day – whether a transit system is reporting incidents to TSA, and whether there is a security person on duty. And finally,

5. The work of these inspectors may not be as robust as reported. According to one former inspector, TSA management encourages inspectors to record more activities to make it look like they are busier than they really are.

These findings are disturbing to me. Here we have TSA hiring more and more surface inspectors. And yet, where is the security benefit?

In the last five years, the budget for this program has quadrupled. And in the history of the program, only one situation has ever resulted in a punitive fine, across the entire country, as a result of these inspections.

Now, I've already stated that TSA has a very limited amount of money dedicated to surface transportation security. And there are some great programs out there, particularly the Transit Security Grant Program administered by FEMA.

This grant program allows local transit agencies and law enforcement to fund counterterrorism teams, canine detection teams, and other successful initiatives.

We owe it to the taxpayer to take a close look at the TSA inspectors program and determine whether this is a good use of limited resources, or if this funding would be better spent on other surface initiatives that are designed to prevent an attack.

Keeping in mind that we all want the safest, most secure transit possible.

Today, I look forward to hearing from industry stakeholders about how TSA can do a better job of allocating its surface security resources. No one has more invested in this than you do.

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